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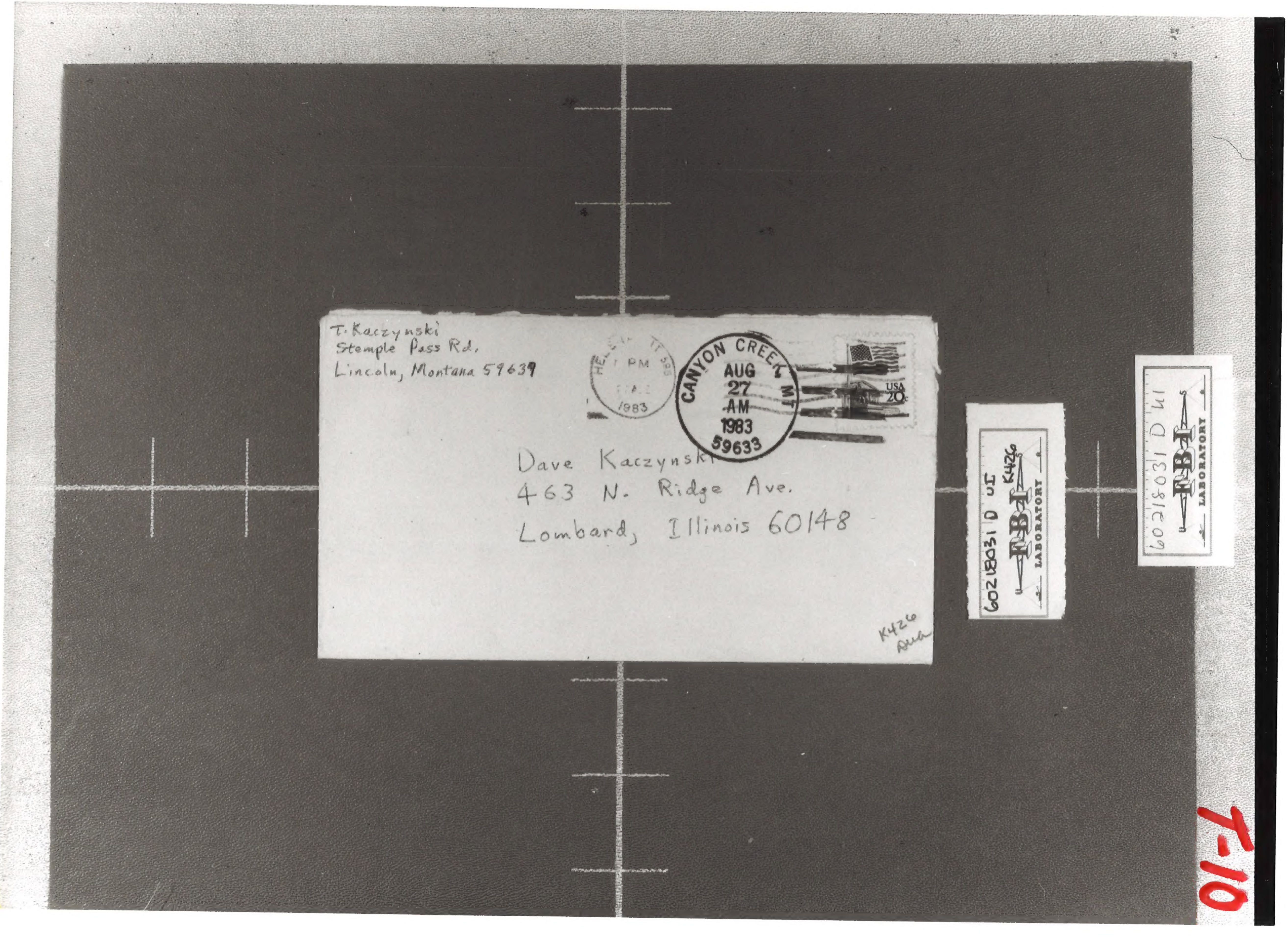

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①

Dear Dave:

I sent my drawing to Aunt Freda. You weren't sure whether I should send it to Hoken and Jean, and I feel sorry for Aunt Freda cause she's had a hard life, and she was always nice to me when I was a small child. If she doesn't find the drawing cheering, at least it ought to give her an erotic kick. And I know she's no prude and will not object to a dirty picture. I mean, you know, those old folks like any mark of consideration — even one that is a little unconventional.

To satisfy your curiosity about the picture: Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, the Roman poet), tells the story of Atalanta and Meleager. It seems there was this giant-sized wild boar, called the Kalydonian Boar, that was ravaging the Greek district of Kalydonia. The king of this district issued a call to all the heroes of Greece to come and hunt this obnoxious monster.

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②

A great many came, and among them also a heroine named Atalanta. Atalanta was a character somewhat like the huntress-godess Diana (Artemis). Instead of spending her days primping in front of a mirror like any normal girl, she spent her time running around in the woods, hunting, and in this she developed exceptional prowess.

Also among the heroes who joined the hunt was Meleager, son of the king of Kalydonia. As soon as Meleager saw Atalanta he fell in love with her.

Well, on the day of the hunt, the first to succeed in wounding the boar was Atalanta; she hit the beast with an arrow. But the wound was not too serious, and Meleager was the one who finally killed the animal. Being in love with Atalanta, he insisted that the "spoils" (ie., the hide and so forth) should be

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given to Atalanta, on the grounds that she had drawn first blood. Meleager's uncle — his mother's brother — objected to this arrangement on the grounds that it was shameful to give the trophies to a woman. Of course he was perfectly right, but anyway one thing led to another, Meleager and his uncle fought, and the former killed the latter. (3)

Meleager's mother, after considerable vacillation in Ovid's account, finally decided that she loved her brother more than her son, and so killed Meleager in the following manner.

At Meleager's birth there had been a prophecy to the effect that the baby would live just so long as a certain piece of wood, then on the fire of the household, lasted. When the wood was all burned up,

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Meleager would kick the bucket. ④
So Meleager's mother snatched the brand from the fire and put it out, and thereafter preserved it with great care. So after Meleager bumped off his uncle, his mother put the brand back on the fire and when it was all burned up, Meleager croaked.

Ovid doesn't say whether Meleager had time to have any fun with Atalanta before his mother fixed his wagon, but apparently some Roman painter believed that he did, because Suetonius tells the following story about the emperor Tiberius.

It seems that someone made a peculiar bequest to Tiberius. Tiberius could choose one of 2 things from the dead man's property: either 10,000 gold pieces (Auriae, I take it) or a certain

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⑤

painting. Suetonius rather sourly informs us that Tiberius not only took the painting in preference to the money, but hung it in his bedroom. "The painting", concludes Suetonius, "depicted Atalanta performing fellatio with Meleager". So you can guess what my drawing was. I made Atalanta so beautiful ...

Reading your next-to-last letter I got the impression that you had the impression that the poetry I quoted was Aztek. I mentioned Aztec poetry but didn't ~~put~~ quote any of it. The poetry I quoted was ancient Irish poetry. As to your remarks on primitive cruelty and bloodthirstyness, judging from what I have read, the most primitive peoples — those still in the purely hunting-and-gathering stage of existence — are NOT typically cruel, bloodthirsty, or warlike. The blood-thirsty and warlike ones usually are the more "advanced" peoples — neolithic and agricultural peoples, and peoples in still more "advanced" stages. As you know, the Aztecs were civilized.

By the way here is a book you would like to read: The Forest People by Colin Turnbull. If you take the trouble to look it up next time you go to the Lombard Library (They do have the book there), I think you will

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consider it well worth reading.

And speaking of poetry, I quote from "Mexico and the Old Southwest", by Haldeen Braddy, the following poem written by an unsophisticated woman dope-addict. Despite the awkwardness it shows in places, I think it is better than a lot of poetry written by educated, "serious" poets. In fact I think it is a really good poem, despite the fact that it is completely foreign to my own attitudes and concerns.

BOP BUBBLE

The drums are beating faster
than the beating of my heart.
The rythm gets more frantic,
And it tears my soul apart.
In the background I can hear
The wailing of a horn,
As the night is drifting on
Into another dawn.
So I sit here, and I'm nodding*,
And I hear Lester blow.
I dig the blasting of his sax;
the sound's both sweet and low.
The music's really getting hot.
It's setting off a spark;
It's ready to explode right now
In this inviting dark.
Yes, this is my world always,
With the best kicks I have known;

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*Dope-addict jargon meaning half asleep under the influence of dope.

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And when I get the feel of it,
I'm by myself alone.
Then I'm cut off from all of you,
Though I know deep down within
That it gets me as it gets you
Way underneath your skin.

Braddy quotes 5 other poems by this same anonymous junkie (with the condescending remark "however short on literary merit ...") He got the poems from an agent of the Bureau of Narcotics and describes the poetess as "of unmistakeable folk status". Naturally, I've quoted the poem that I thought was best. It seems to me that these poems exhibit great sincerity of expression — one gets the impression that the writer's motive is not ego or vanity or an aspiration to "create art", but simply the desire for self-expression. And the expression is effective. In the poem quoted it seems to me that she successfully conveys to the reader her feelings about the (to us) strange and degenerate world that she lives in.

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I think now that if I come to see you (8)
in Texas, I will come in late november or later.
To judge from the appearance of the tops, I am
going to have a big crop of parsnips. Last year
I ate parsnips from november till April 1, and
I wouldn't care to eat too much more of them in
an equal period of time than what I ate last year.
So if my crop this year turns out to be much
bigger than last year's crop, I'll want to take
some of them and ~~sto~~ wash them, slice them, and
dry them, after which they should keep indefinitely.
I probably harvest them in early November, and
may then be rather busy.

If I come, I will help you dig your
hole, but I will not accept any payment for
it. Your hospitality will be ample payment.

Ted

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